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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/740,072	12/18/2003	Michael L. Howard	2291.2.19.1	2131

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EXAMINER

WOO, STELLA L

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2614

DATE MAILED: 12/13/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/740,072

Applicant(s)

HOWARD ET AL.

Examiner

Stella L. Woo

Art Unit

2614

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 22 November 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on November 22, 2006 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1-2, 4-6, 8-10, 12-15, 17-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jenkins et al. (US 5,987,105, hereinafter "Jenkins") in view of Lavey, Jr. et al. (US 6,023,698, hereinafter "Lavey"), and further in view of Nap et al. (US 6,246,677 B1, hereinafter "Nap").

Regarding claims 1-2, 9-10, 15, Jenkins discloses an embedded device (within home appliance 1; Figure 1), the embedded device comprising:

a processor (controller 2);

an input button (key on the user interface panel; col. 4, lines 61-63);

a speaker (speaker 5; col. 3, lines 47-55);
memory (memory device 4 stores software and status data; col. 3, lines 31-32, 36-44);
an identification (serial number is stored in memory; col. 3, lines 37-40);
and
an audio output generator stored in the memory (executing software stored memory device 4 is used by controller 2 to energize speaker 5 to produce audible tones encoded with information stored in the memory device 4, the information including the device's serial number along with status data; col. 3, lines 29-60).

Jenkins differs from the claims in that the identification stored and accessed is the device serial number (col. 3, lines 37-40), not a user identification. However, Lavey teaches that it is old and well known to use a product's serial number as user identification (col. 8, lines 17-20) such that it would have been obvious to an artisan of ordinary skill to incorporate the use of a serial number for identifying the user, as taught by Lavey, within the system of Jenkins so that the serial number stored and accessed in Jenkins can be used to identify the user.

The combination of Jenkins and Lavey differs from the claims in that it does not specify using the serial number for billing purposes. However, as shown by Nap, it is old and well known to use the serial number of a remotely monitored device for billing purposes (col. 15, lines 58-65) such that it would

have been obvious to incorporate such use of the device's serial number for billing, as taught by Nap, within the combination of Jenkins and Lavey in order to provide the subscriber with accurate billing details regarding services performed for the home appliance.

Regarding claims 4-6, 12-14, in Jenkins, the status data can be whether the drain pump is on, the hot water valve is open, serial number, number of cycles completed, alerts, errors, faults, etc. (col. 3, lines 35-40).

Regarding claims 8 and 17, in Jenkins, home appliance 1 can be washing machine, refrigerator, freezer, clothes dryer, dishwasher, stove, microwave ovens, etc. (col. 3, lines 18-25).

Regarding claims 9-10, 15, Jenkins additionally discloses an audio status collector (service center 6) comprising:

an audio decoder (personal computer 13 executes software which enables it to decode the audio electric signals; col. 4, lines 30-33);

a communications module (signal conditioning circuit 15); and

an audio decoding table (Table 1; col. 6, lines 22-34).

Regarding claim 18, in Jenkins, note PSTN 12.

Regarding claims 19-20, in Jenkins, a cellular telephone can be used at the appliance site in the same manner as handset 9 to transmit the audible data signal generated by loudspeaker 5.

4. Claims 3 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Jenkins, Lavey and Nap, and further in view of Merriam et al. (US 5,311,581, hereinafter "Merriam").

The combination of Jenkins, Lavey and Nap differs from claims 3 and 11 in that it does not specify the signal tones as being DTMF tones. However, Merriam teaches the well known use of DTMF tones (Abstract) to transmit status information such that it would have been obvious to an artisan of ordinary skill to incorporate such use of DTMF tones, as taught by Merriam, within the combination of Jenkins, Lavey and Nap for outputting the audible signals.

5. Claims 7 and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jenkins in view of Lavey, and further in view of Reeder et al. (US 5,729,596, hereinafter "Reeder").

The combination of Jenkins, Lavey and Nap differs from claims 7 and 16 in that it does not specify the home appliance as being a television. However, Reeder teaches that it is well known to communicate data from a television as well as a washing machine or microwave oven (identify code from TV 1b as well from WM 1d or μ W 1e) such that it would have been obvious to an artisan of ordinary skill to incorporate the use of a home appliance such as a television, as taught by Reeder, within combination of Jenkins, Lavey and Nap.

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-20 have been considered but are moot in view of the new grounds of rejection.

Conclusion

7. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. White et al. and Linder et al. show other monitoring systems in which a device's serial number is used for billing purposes.

8. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Stella L. Woo whose telephone number is (571) 272-7512. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m..

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Curtis Kuntz can be reached on (571) 272-7499. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stella L. Woo', with a stylized, cursive flourish extending to the right.

Stella L. Woo
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 2614